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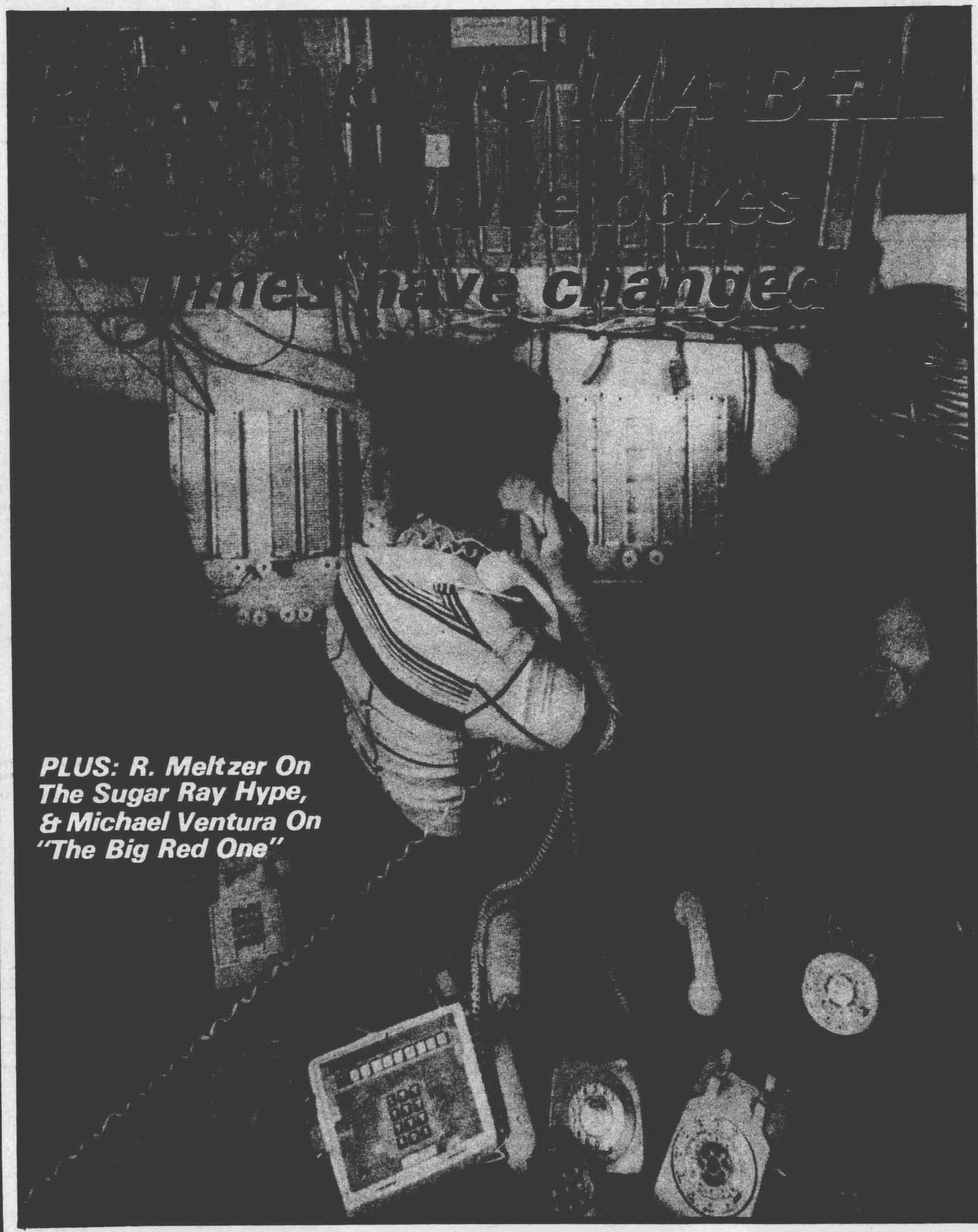

Times have changed.

PLUS: R. Meltzer On The Sugar Ray Hype, & Michael Ventura On "The Big Red One"

Inside: L.A.'s Biggest Guide to Movies, Music & Fun

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Letters

Nice Boys Dancing

Dear Editor:

Re: Michael Ventura's "White Boys Dancing" (July 11-17):

As one of those Graceful White Girls, I will say something about and in defense of Nice White Boys (though, I know, they are able to speak for themselves.)

White Boys may not be heirs to the throne of Soul — the Soul that woos the Spirits — but they *are* heirs to the legacy of White Dancing, which quite succinctly is about wooing done here on earth. White Dancing is courtship, no less and no more. I recall many nights of prodding my White Boy sweethearts to join me on the dance floor and be moved by the music. Prodding them, yes, because their stubborn looking-away and shuffling-of-feet are telling me, "Nah — maybe next song." But, oh, that shuffling . . . doesn't that look a bit like what we know to be female coyness? And doesn't coyness work wonders! Resistance is a part of the mating ritual, whichever gender employs it, and it is just as effective as strutting one's stuff.

Awkwardness is the White Boy's craft — and if he doesn't have it he might even cultivate it. Those goofy moves seem less inspiration than reflexes from a medical tool. Nevertheless, they are signals, and another brand of peacockiness.

Cases in point: Gary Cooper, Jimmy Stewart and even Bogart. Not too comfortable with their bodies, these boys. But didn't they evoke nice things from women? Perhaps not straining to steer the metaphysical beings away from their better judgements, the awkward guys keep good track of their graceful goddesses in the corporal realm. As a Nice White Girl, that's fine with me.

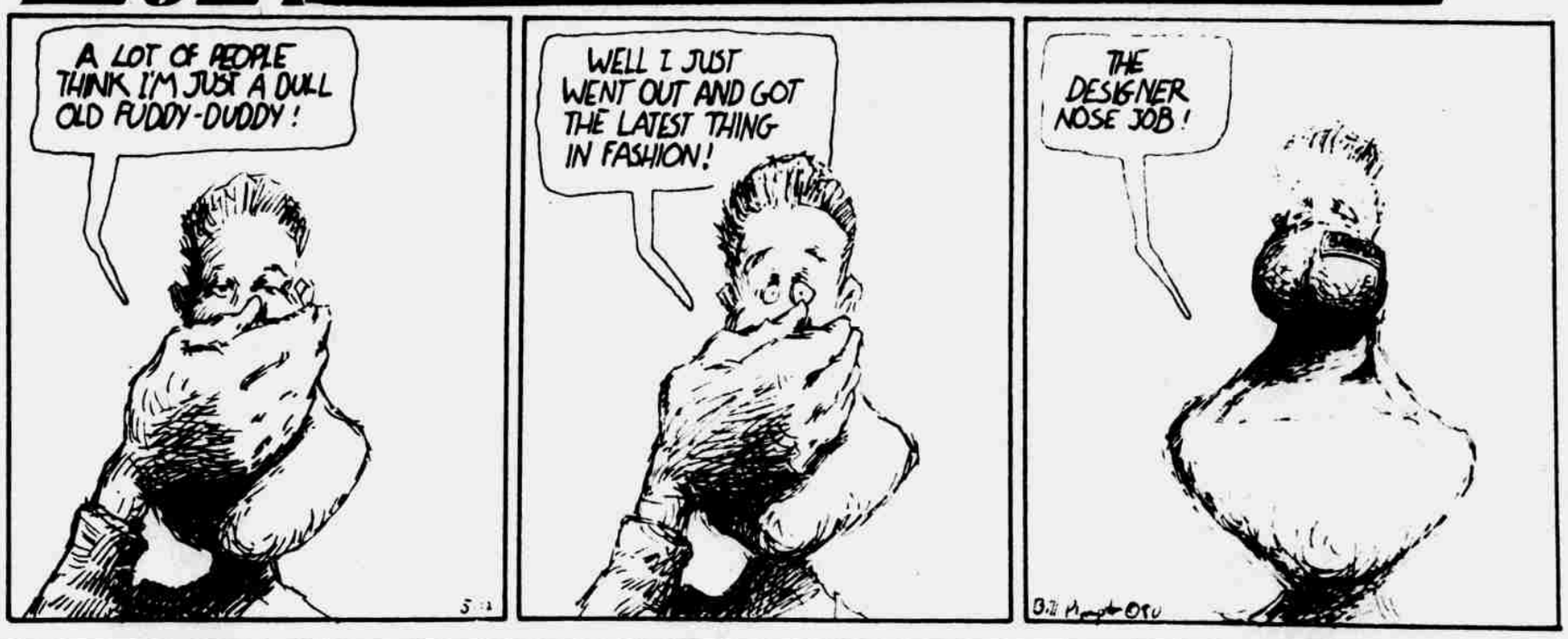
—Andrea Shapiro
Hollywood

It's Your Money

Dear Editor:

Though Bill Weiner may be pleased to once again save a few bucks, how about those in your readership who will pass up a charming film because Ginger Varney missed the humor and humanity of *My Bodyguard* (July 11-18). "Lazy" is not the word to describe a film that has it's audience laughing, cheering, applauding. As *Harold & Maude* and *Where's Poppa*, *My Bodyguard* is a special, magical little movie to be enjoyed by those who savour life by not taking it or themselves too seriously. —Darra Flaxman

Plympton


A LOT OF PEOPLE THINK I'M JUST A DULL OLD FUDDY-DUDDY!
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THE DESIGNER NOSE JOB!

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Insights

The Ubiquitous Wiretap

This week's cover article about a particularly resourceful Los Angeles "phone phreak" — a person expert at using the phones for various telephonic and computer rip-offs — touches on a story of awesome but overlooked magnitude: the fact that the telephone system throughout both the U.S. and in many other countries can be "penetrated" by virtually anyone right from their home phone. And penetration includes eavesdropping. Simply by knowing the proper series of code numbers and having access to a touch telephone, it's possible to "tap into" another line without the party knowing. This is done through the same telephone apparatus that allows an operator to "emergency interrupt" a phone call or merely check whether the line is busy without the talkers being aware of the operator's presence.

For the last few years, phone phreaks around the country have been boasting of their ability to eavesdrop virtually at will and very little reporting has been done on this phenomenon by the media. The key to using the system is obtaining the code numbers which must be punched on a touch tone phone in order to trigger the switching equipment that the operator uses on the "validation" lines. (Every neighborhood exchange has a trunk line with its own code.) Phone phreaks get these codes in a number of ways, mostly by deceiving operators into believing they are service repair men.

But what about the government? What about the FBI, CIA, NSA, Secret Service, as well as all those local police departments shown in the past to be engaged in fairly massive illegal wiretapping? Do they have access to the codes and are they using them?

According to a number of telephone company employees interviewed with the assistance of union officials, the security departments of the various local phone companies around the country for years would establish direct telephone taps simply by calling the "frame man" at a local switching station and ordering a cross hook from the phone to be tapped to another line designated by the security man. *Voila*, an instant wiretap *without* a court order, without papers delivered through the legal departments of the phone companies — with nothing but a phone call. These were the old "physical" wiretaps which, carried out by agencies ranging from the FBI to the Agriculture Department, created so much media stir for a brief period after Watergate.

According to the union members, most of these taps were ordered by ex-FBI men in the security departments to help old buddies either in the FBI or in local police department intelligence squads, meaning the ones who went after political activists. (The security departments of most local phone companies are comprised predominantly of former FBI officials, with ex-cops from various police intelligence units adding a second block.)

Following the Watergate disclosures, and under pressure from Congress, Bell and the other companies apparently tightened up on internal procedures, making it harder for a security department official to order a secret wiretap. But nothing prevented a security official from giving a buddy in the FBI the access codes. The question is, did they?

The answer is that, short of another Congressional investigation or a confession from some security telephone company department personnel, there's no way of knowing. But there *is* one clue. The limitation of eavesdropping via the code system is that in order to know when the party is on the line and talking, a special device must be hooked up to keep the "validating" system open at all times (and presumably hooked to a tape recorder). But this device can be detected by phone company employees who might make a fuss. Another way of knowing whether the party is using the phone is to dial the code regularly. However, according to phone phreaks, this is slightly time consuming, so it's often a short cut to just dial the number directly and, if it's busy, *then* hang up and dial the access code. This also means that if the phone is not busy, it will ring in the party's home.

Well then. What might you assume if someone were getting a lot of one-ring phone calls on a continuous and persistent basis? If you understand the access system, might you not theorize that someone was trying to find out if a line was busy? And what about people who have been singled out by the government in the past for scrutiny? Do they get a lot of one-ring phone calls?

According to a survey made some time ago by a current *L.A. Weekly* staffer, a number of known government targets were indeed receiving persistent and continuous one-ring phone calls. The list included several radical attorneys including William Kunstler of Chicago Seven fame, a former anti-war leader suing the government for proven illegal wiretapping and surveillance (the government has admitted it) and a number of Mafia-connected suspects known to be under scrutiny.

Does this absolutely prove that the police agencies are still engaged in massive illegal eavesdropping? No. But the system for it existed (and still exists) and, as the post-Watergate revelations showed, the agencies certainly had the inclination. ■

photo by Dennis Keeley

THE PHINE ART OF PHONE PHREAKING

A Story Of Telephones, Computers And The American Way

by Eddie Rivera

At approximately 3:17 p.m. on Thursday, April 24, 22 operators at the Pasadena Traffic Service Position System office of Pacific Telephone shut down for about 20 minutes under the orders of a supervisor who informed them that there had been a system overload due to "a piece of heavy machinery falling on a cable in the office."

This meant that all calls normally routed through that office (operator-assisted calls in the Hollywood area) had to be re-routed through El Monte, creating a serious overload in that system. Had the shutdown occurred during a heavy phone use period — Mother's Day, for example — it would have shut down all telephone communication in most of the L.A. basin.

At 3:40 that same afternoon, however, the 22 operators in Pasadena plugged back in again and business returned to normal. Hollywood was functioning again.

An overload in a system the size of Pacific Telephone's, which handles 4.4 million phones in this city alone, is not that unusual, yet this particular breakdown was just a little bit different from all the others because of one small fact.

It never happened.

Sure, the operators did shut down and the El Monte office did become overloaded and the office's deviation record, which keeps track of all calls received by a particular office, did go a little wacky that afternoon. But the phone facilities manager who was called at one point to try and sort things out was unable to come up with an answer as to why the breakdown occurred. No wonder. The shutdown was called by a supervisor who was impossible to trace. He wasn't a supervisor at all, you see. He was a "phone phreak."

A week previous to this prank, a major motor company's parts department in Detroit, Michigan, received an order for 99 parts valued at $320.00 each to be sent to a plant in Texas. The order was subsequently cancelled, but again, it never "really" took place.

Same with the $2 million cash deposit placed in the account of ABC enterprises in Bangor, Maine. The computer recorded it, but it never really happened. Again, it was a phone phreak.

I'm sitting in the Hollywood command post apartment of "Rosco," a lean, 20-year-old college student with a penchant for electronics and junk food. The apartment is filled with various phone and computer parts, Pacific Telephone manuals, recording equipment and electronic gear. His conference line is a four-way set-up where, by calling a certain number, you are connected to a four-way conversation with whoever else happens to call.

Rosco is probably the most knowledgeable phone phreak in the country; a person who, through his own diligent, perhaps obsessed research, has reached the point where he is theoretically capable of bringing this country's telephone and computer systems to their knees. His state-of-the-art equipment is deceiving — a white touch-sensitive phone. His method — nothing that anyone can't learn after doing the "required reading."

"Hear that?" he asks, after punching up a number and getting a crackling ring over the phone speakers. "That's an Argentinian ring."

"Or how about this?" he smiles and dials a number without looking. Rosco dials phones like Bobby Fischer moves chess pieces: deftly, assuredly, and with a grace that far exceeds the task. A loud kachunk comes over the speakers and then another and then a recorded message. "That's the recording you get in Tokyo when you've reached a number that is no longer in service," he explains.

All in a day's play to him: the calls to the phone company (he was the "supervisor"), the calls to the auto plant (he ordered the parts), the company in Maine (he made the cash deposit); all of it was his way of having a little fun. He's not out to make money off his special knowledge, and, in fact, always calls back to correct the situations he creates. It's just the power to do these things that pleases him.

I wonder aloud if it doesn't get a little expensive?

"Oh, I never have to pay for a call if I don't want to," he says straight-faced. Apparently not, as we'll see later.

We have met in a small TV repair shop near Santa Monica Blvd. to discuss his "hobby" further. Munching on a glazed donut from Winchell's in a crowded back room strewn with literally hundreds of empty and half-empty paper coffee cups, he, along with his phone partner and financial backer (hey, somebody has to buy the equipment), run down a little history for me.

"I've been into phones for about a year," says Rosco, "but in that year I've gotten just about more information than anyone else in the country." "I'll drink to that," says his partner.

And so will I. I stumbled across him at the very beginning of my research into phone phreaks. I left a message for him to call me and within a few hours I received a call from a man that repeated to me the name my phone was listed under, my home address and the kind of car I drove, along with the license number, of course. "This is Rosco," he said.

I knew I was dealing with the major leagues.

Apparently, from just my phone number (unlisted, by the way), he was able to derive all that information through his access to various computers. "I could have read you your last month's gas bill, too," he laughed. I gulped.

Rosco is the first to admit that phone phreaks existed even before he was out of diapers: with any system, there are always those who seek to subvert it, to be the wrench in the corporate works. But Rosco seems to have taken this outlaw "hobby" and elevated it to a form that approaches art. He at least has pursued it with an artist's zeal and pride.

"As I understand it," Rosco explains, "the first phone phreaks were these blind kids at a summer camp many years ago. When the tone dialing system was introduced by Bell, they heard these tones, the MF tones that complete long distance

"In Rosco's notebooks are computer access codes to airlines, the DMV, Western Union and almost every major corporation in the U.S."

calls. Having perfect pitch, they built an oscillator which duplicated the tones and they were able to play the Bell System like a pitch pipe and call anywhere in the world for free."

Phreak history also recalls that it was a certain "Captain Crunch," an electronics buff in the Bay Area, who is generally given credit for discovering that the whistles given away in a box of Captain Crunch breakfast cereal had the same frequency (2200 Hz) as the tones that telephone operators hear when coins are dropped into a pay phone. (A dime is two 10-millisecond pulses spaced 10 milliseconds apart, a nickel is one 10-millisecond pulse, and a quarter is a 5.5. millisecond pulse spaced five milliseconds apart.) By blowing his whistle the right way, so to speak, Captain Crunch could call all over the world for free. The whistle soon gave way to a red box, which did this electronically, and then the blue box, which duplicated multi-frequency trunking tones just by pushing premarked buttons.

Rosco's feelings for the foredaddy of phone phreaks, however, do not approach those of reverence.

"Captain Crunch is an idiot," he says. "The only thing he knows about is blue boxes. He was into electronics, but he wasn't really into phones other than blue boxing. He was helpless without his blue box."

Which is apparently not the case with Rosco.

"I would never use a blue box or any other type of box. It's stupid and too easy to get caught." Captain Crunch himself was arrested and charged with a number of offenses involving telephone fraud. Apparently Rosco also utilizes a whole new system for making free calls involving private microwave networks.

For instance:

Southern Pacific Communications is a private phone system designed to make long distance calling cheaper for those who make a lot of long distance calls in the course of a month. Through a membership, customers are given a list of numbers to use in their geographic area and a personal authorization code to use to complete their calls.

He demonstrates for me:

"See, if I wanted to call New York, I'd punch up the SPC number, the code number, the area code and then the number I want to call. For me, then, it's actually just a local call through the network because there's a phone line in New York being picked up and it's being linked to here through microwaves.' He shows me an SPC card with numbers printed on the back. "To get a card like this, I just call the company and ask them to send me an 'extra' card. They assume I'm a member because I have an authorization number."

And how does he get hold of an authorization number?

"I can just scan for it. To do that, I punch any five digits on the phone. If it works, great. If it doesn't, I just try again. Given the number of customers they have, the odds are that in ten tries I'll have a number that works.

" 'Captain Crunch is an idiot,' Rosco says. 'He was helpless without his blue box.' "

Rosco's "financial backer" cuts in. "I call China every week at least four times with these lines, although not with an SPC line, because that's land-locked."

"Wanna see?" says Rosco. He picks up a portable dialing pad which looks like the touch tone units on telephones, only this is powered by a small battery taped to the back. He holds this up to the receiver of a dial phone and begins punching, thereby converting that dial phone into a touch tone.

In about three minutes, an Oriental voice answers. Rosco smiles like a little boy discovering Disneyland for the first time.

"Here's how we do it," Rosco explains. "I call through a 'fluke' in the Atlantic Richfield company line. [In phone phreak terminology a fluke is any known phone malfunction.] I dial up a local Arco number, which is a remote access line. That means just what it says. Through a number local to me, I'm able to access their phone network. Then I get their dial tone, the ARCONET dial tone. From there I dial a number, any number in the 415 area code, and it answers. Then I hang up and through the little fluke in the ARCO network I get a dial tone from *their* end. This is a known fluke to phone phreaks, and because of it, once I get a dial tone from their end, I'm able to place calls anywhere I want. On their line, of course."

Driving down Vine on our way back to his apartment, he points out a gas station. "They give me free gas whenever I want," Rosco says, "because I showed them how to call Germany for free."

Back in the apartment, Rosco shows me a stack of notebooks filled neatly with telephone information: private lines to corporations like ARCO and Ralston-Purina and Exxon that allow him to call anywhere for free. Most of the numbers he has acquired through the phone phreak network, a vast underground of persons intent on accessing every private telephone system they can. "A lot of the numbers," explains Rosco, "I get from phone phreaks who call me and say, 'Look, I got this number for you but I don't know how to make it work.' So I'll call the number and either figure it out for them through a little hard work or else I'll call the company, pose as an employee, and demand to know why the number doesn't work. Usually, they'll gladly explain it to me. See? It's very simple."

In the notebooks are also computer access codes to everything from airlines to the DMV, from Western Union to almost every major corporation in the United States, all of which he has accumulated in the last year through diligent research at a computer terminal at school. The implications are clear. In effect, he is a human computer linkup to all of the banks of these computers, and from his apartment he is able to order prepaid plane tickets and hotel accommodations, determine car registrations and ownerships and even have access to the DMV warrant banks with the ability to either enter warrants or eliminate them.

I was particularly interested in how he managed to order airline tickets. He did it, he said, by accessing the computer code that travel agents use to enter information into their own terminals. He could, for example, inform a travel agent computer terminal that Tony Macaroni had purchased an airline ticket to Tokyo, and tell the computer to send the bill to a fictitious address — or back to the airlines, for that matter.

"I guess you could really destroy people if you wanted to, couldn't you?" I venture.

"Oh sure, but I have no interest in that. If I wanted to, I could destroy a person's credit rating, eliminate bad credit — any number of things."

It seems to be true that most phone phreaks ply their trade just for fun and not really for profit.

Last year, for instance, there was a television show on KTTV called *Say "Pow,"*

PLUG INTO A STRANGE NEW WORLD

(Click)

"Who just got on?"

"Hi, this is Cindy from Burbank."

"Cindy?"

"What do you look like, baby?"

"Cindy, I want your bod."

"Who is this?"

It is somewhere between midnight and morning in Los Angeles when the preceding conversation takes place, part of what must go on record as the longest running single conversation by any four different people in a single place, if such records are kept.

It is a conference conversation and it works like this: By dialing a certain number, participants are immediately patched into an open line where four persons at one time, all over the city, and sometimes the country, are speaking to each other at once.

There is nothing illegal about this part of a phone phreak's activity. Conference lines are usually available to businesses who need to hold meetings with various representatives across the nation at any one time. This one just happens to be run by a private party.

This particular conference seems to be part dating service, crisis intervention and gossip line.

There are the regulars: Richard from Beverly Hills, Coleen from Burbank, Laurie from Montebello, "The Lizard" from Baltimore, Maryland, who calls over an SPC line from his night job, Suzy and Cindy from Hollywood who like to meet boys and talk about movies, and various other sundry regulars known by their first name only.

At any given point in the day or night, one of these people will be on the line, almost certainly Coleen. She is a divorced housewife who told me that she often dials the conference line at seven in the morning when she gets up and then leaves it on the line all day, talking at random points as she goes about her business.

During the morning and early afternoon, the line is mostly teenagers who've stayed home from school with nothing better to do; after three in the afternoon, the lines are almost constantly busy, first with kids home from school and then people coming home from work in the early evening. One caller told an editor at the *Weekly* that he likes to "come home, clean up, have dinner, turn on the TV, get a couple of beers out of the frig and sit on the conference and talk." Many insist that there are specifically five conference line stereotypes — "Jewish, fat, gay, phone phreak or blind." Having met many of the participants, I can attest to both the exceptions and the rules. There are also people who get into phones because on phones they can be anybody they want.

Especially at night. Because at night the line becomes a regular sex matching service, and the conversations turn from daily chit-chat to midnight meetings and propositions. Soon after I began my research, my home number was given out on several feedback and conference lines and I began getting the same breathy female teenage voice in the wee hours: "Hi. What are you wearing?" Which soon became, "Hi. I'd like to _____ your _____. Why don't you come pick me up? God. I am so horny." Gee, I almost took my phone off the hook.

Speaking of such matters, for those who get off on breathy female voices over the phone, there's always FreekyFone, run by someone named Freeky Dave who writes for various local porno publications when not running his line. It is a collection of callers who dial in to air their fantasies over the phone to be played back over the weekends. The messages, ranging in length from one minute to 12 or 15, are sometimes silly, often graphic recollections of sexual episodes interspersed with commercials, jokes and music. A random call a few weeks back produced a young woman discussing masturbation (most of the callers seem to be female), a woman discussing an incident in her boyfriend's van, various moans and groans (Hey, they sounded realistic to me) and an older woman discussing her stay in a mental hospital.

Lines like FreekyFone are called feedback lines and are set up like regular answering machines, with the messages put back together like radio shows. Which is how Mike Montage runs his line. He uses two answering machines to take the calls, which he later splices up on a Sony reel-to-reel with narration much like a hip FM broadcast. His line, however, doesn't seem to be sexual. Most of his programs deal with issues and the like, one recent program featuring an interview with an attorney for the California Marijuana Initiative.

There are about 25 different lines of this type in the L.A. area, ranging from FreekyFone to diverting lines which divert your call at random to any of the various phone entertainment lines.

And you thought the telephone was just to call and say you're gonna be a little late? C'mon.

(Click)

"Who's this?"

"This is Rick from Sunland."

"Steve from Pasadena."

"Coleen from Burbank."

"Hey, Coleen, what do you look like?" ■

See page 20 for a list of conference phone numbers.

Continued from page 7

which was a live television version of the Space Invaders games you see in every bar in town. Contestants would call in and, on signal, while watching their screens at home, would shout "Pow!" Voice-activated rockets would then fire at the little flying saucers moving across the screen. Well . . . A show like this was just begging for a phone phreak to come in and have some fun with the line.

It happened twice.

The first time two phone phreaks working together, one at home and the other at Denny's in Van Nuys, managed to have five operators at once break in with emergency calls that started all the cannons firing like crazy at the exact moment the contestant was directed to talk. The second time a phreak directed an operator to make an emergency breakthrough to the game show number and have himself put on the line live. Then, just after the announcer finished ranting on about the trip to Sea World that the contestant could win, our friendly phreak broke in and screamed, "Hey, you motherfucking son of a bitch!" He was immediately disconnected and the show went off the air for good the following week.

"Well," I say to Rosco after an afternoon of crazy and somewhat disturbing demonstrations, "I guess you can do anything that the phone company can do."

"Wrong." He looks me dead in the eye. "I can do more. Much more. I can change numbers, eliminate call forwarding services, disconnect people's numbers, anything. If I wanted to," he says, holding out blank Pacific Telephone forms, "I could send you a bill for $5,000. And if you didn't pay it I'd send you a warning," holding up one. "And if you still didn't pay I'd send you one of these," holding up the familiar red-lined disconnect notice. "Then, if you still didn't pay, I'd shut off your phone."

The phone company's response to all of this seems to be either one of smug confidence or frightening ignorance.

According to Joe McDonough, a spokesman for Pacific Telephone, it isn't possible for Rosco to have access to all the information that he does. In light of all that had been demonstrated to me, McDonough's responses to various interview questions seem almost laughable:

Is it possible for a person who is not a phone company employee to have as much, if not more, access to classified information than a phone company employee?

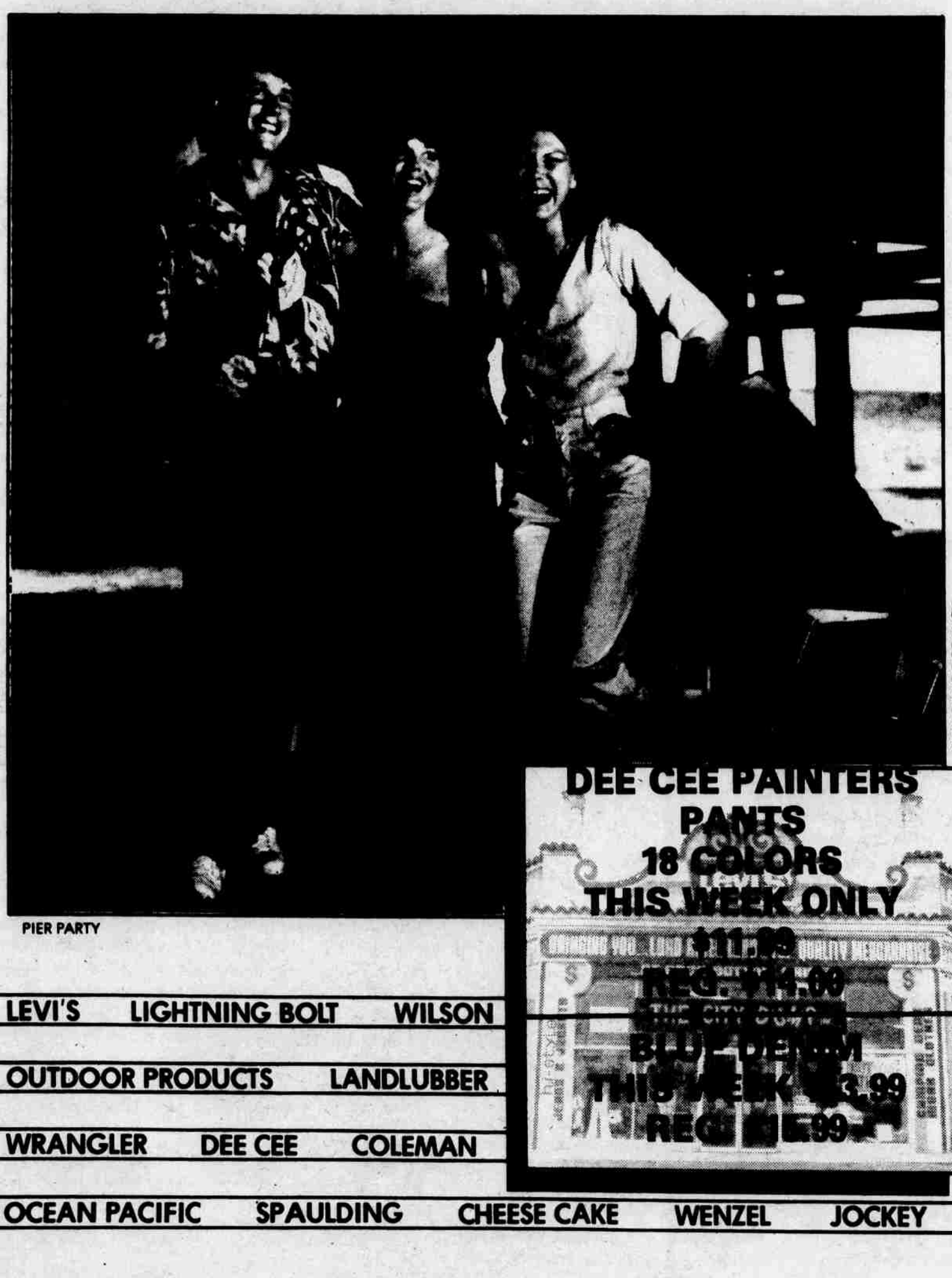
No.

Is the tone signaling system easily subverted by persons with the proper information or access?

The tone signaling system is not easily subverted by anyone. It is almost impossible for an unauthorized person to access the system.

Has the incidence of telephone abuse increased since the advent of the tone signaling system?

Initially there was an increase in the number of "experimenters" attempting to test and manipulate the network for their own use. However, as the phone company became aware of them, steps were taken to



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Phone For Fun

Been stood up for that film at the Nuart and you've seen every episode of *Lou Grant* twice already? Try giving some of these lines a call. Check to see which ones are in your area (it's in the front of your phone book) and remember to check out the area codes as well in order to avoid a big surprise at the end of the month (Fullerton? I don't know anybody in Fullerton!). All of these numbers were current at press time.

JOKE LINES

The Machine	(213) 833-3339
	(213) 822-2329
	(213) 836-5556
	(714) 833-3339
ZZZZZZZZZZ	(213) 836-5566
Fluke	(213) 391-5336
Uncle Bill	(213) 548-6000
Zygot	(714) 839-3000
	(714) 894-9000
Variety Line	(213) 773-3825

COMMENT LINES

The Forum	(714) 639-6969
FreekyFone	(213) 992-0999
	(415) 474-0404
Feedback	(213) 852-7111
	(213) 982-6669
	(213) 995-7799
	Input: (213) 982-6999
Express Line	(805) 252-9777
	(213) 855-1234
	(213) 989-1874
Dual-Phase	(213) 506-5757
	(213) 506-4849
	(213) 984-1800
	Input: (213) 506-4848
Montage	(213) 660-2800
	(213) 995-8951
	(714) 641-8087
	Input: (213) 660-2907
The Short Circuit	
	Input & Output: (213) 777-5500
	Input & Output: (714) 551-0400
	Output: (714) 637-8887
	Input: (714) 637-6626
Dial-A-Spaz	(415) 388-6633
	(415) 388-7755

CONFERENCES

The UFO Conference	(213) 462-6836
Valley Connection	
Men	(213) 506-7888
Women	(213) 506-4933
Feedback Cross Connection	(213) 765-6000
Hey Wow	(213) 994-9991
The Link Conference	(714) 839-0300
	(714) 839-3300
The Orange Conference	(714) 532-6382
Chatterbox	(415) 453-9084

reduce or eliminate the opportunities for unauthorized persons to access the system. Today, persons attempting to practice electronic toll fraud don't have much of a chance of beating the telephone network.

Are telephone operators easily fooled by phone abusers? What is the extent of their training in this regard?

Telephone operators are not easily fooled by telephone abusers. They are well trained to recognize and distinguish legal from illegal tones, and to handle any possible situation that may arise.

Rosco laughs when I tell him this. "He's crazy. The operators are dumb, very dumb. I know." He shows me a notebook in which he has written the names and locations of various telephone operators and their supervisors. Next to their names is a description of their work and phone techniques. It looks like a report card:

Mr. Williams — Hollywood / Very informed, cooperative, friendly.
Mr. Cooper — Pasadena / Slow, uncooperative, rude.
Mrs. Bellington — Hollywood / New, uninformed.

The list covers about ten or 12 operators and their work habits. Also in Rosco's possession are most of the home numbers of Pacific Telephone employees as well as their work numbers and location.

In a sense, Rosco is a parasite as well as a watchdog of the phone company. He respects the people who develop systems for Bell, but only in the sense that they add fuel to the chase; the endless search to beat the system.

According to McDonough, most of the arrests for toll fraud are still made in California, but the number of people being arrested has dwindled in the past few years. This he attributes to the ever-improving security systems used by the Bell systems.

Rosco attributes it to another fact — the increasing sophistication of the phone phreak — himself in particular. "Those that get arrested must not have been thinking or else they just made some stupid mistakes. I have a lot of numbers that I use to make free calls, but I'm quiet with them. Therefore, they're there whenever I need them. And they won't be abused, either. I can choose the cheapest way of routing my calls for the company itself, too. Like, if I want to call long distance, I'll choose something that makes it a little more local for the company. Therefore, that company won't get billed and no one will suspect anything. I guess I am kind of a parasite; living off them, but not really hurting anybody."

He is quick to admit, however, that the information he has access to could be dangerous in somebody else's hands and that what he has showed me so far represents only the tip of the iceberg in terms of the information he could access from computers if he was really devious. "You probably wouldn't understand this, not being a computer person," he says, "But I've also accessed the 1,2 code for the DEC corporation computers. The DEC corporation is one of the companies that build most of the computers used in this country and the 1,2 code is their highest priority code, a code which allows me to access any memory bank of any computer they've ever built."

Does he have dangerous information?

"You figure it out," he replies.

"Where do you think this will all lead you?" I ask, packing up my tape recorder.

"Look," he shrugs, "I'm like everyone else. I'm developing my computer skills. I hope where it leads me eventually is right into a high-paying job.

"Write this number down," he says, reading from his notebook.

"What is it?"

"It's a Pacific Telephone busy signal. Charge calls to it whenever you're at a phone booth somewhere."

On my way out the door I notice a framed scholastic award hanging on the wall next to his door, the last part of which reads, "He is a credit to his family, an asset to his school and a hope for his country."

"See you at the Pentagon," I say.■

Just before our story went to press, the home of one of our sources was searched by the police. Notebooks and equipment were seized. It seems that L.A.'s phone phreaks may soon find it difficult to stay underground and anonymous.

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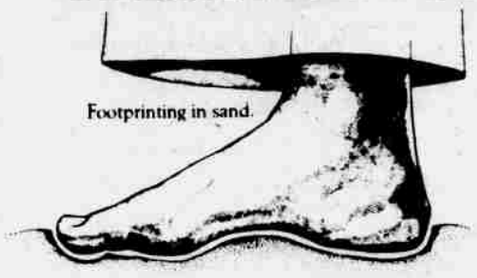

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